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ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

October 1, 2013

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

First, I want to thank you for the multiple times you agreed to meet with me during the period leading up to your confirmation. While we may differ in our views on many issues, I have always appreciated your willingness to sit down and talk with people who have different perspectives.

One of the topics we previously discussed was the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) estimates of methane emissions associated with hydraulically fractured wells. Specifically, I shared my concerns that the EPA inappropriately used Natural Gas STAR program data to estimate the amount of methane emitted from wells completed with hydraulic fracturing. This inappropriate application of data led the EPA to significantly overestimate these emissions, which were then used, in part, to justify a recently finalized regulation on the oil and gas sector, and published in the Agency's most recent Greenhouse Gas Inventory. These inaccurate estimates have also been increasingly used by researchers, as well as domestic and international governmental bodies, as they formulate critical public policy positions. More troubling, a group of Northeastern states is now threatening to sue the Agency if it fails to propose additional emission regulations that specifically target methane.

Since our most recent conversation on this topic and to the Agency's credit, I understand that your team has taken steps to identify more appropriate existing data and to make improvements to the way that the data is applied and interpreted. Earlier this month, the University of Texas and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) jointly released a study containing direct measurements of methane emissions from well completions across four regions of the United States. Importantly, this peer reviewed report concluded that EPA's estimates of methane emissions from hydraulically fractured wells are about fifty times too high.

Given this new data and insight, I believe it is appropriate for EPA to swiftly take action to revise its estimates of emissions from hydraulically fractured wells and to ensure that domestic and international policy makers are aware of this revision.

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What is your plan to address this issue? I appreciate your attention to this matter and would be more than happy to meet with you personally to discuss it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Inhofe". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate